

*To Sarali Disraeli.*

Dec. 15, 1836.

Strangford [fresh from Strathfieldsaye] said he had not yet seen my novel, and there was only one person at the Duke's who had read it — Lady Wilton. She said she had cried so much that she had excited all their curiosity. Bulwer tells me that at Lady Charlotte Bury's the other night he only heard one report, 'Tears, tears, tears!' so he supposes I am right and he is wrong. Colburn is in high spirits about *H. T.* He says he shall not be content unless he works it up like *Pelham*. There were many reviews yesterday. You have of course seen the *Athenaeum*; they were all in that vein, but highly calculated to make people read, if they were wanted, but it is not.<sup>1</sup>

'This vexatious, high-flown, foolish, clever work,' the *Athenaeum* called it. Colburn had not lost his skill in working up a novel. 'I hope,' he writes while the book is in the stocks, 'you will have a dozen more originals to draw from besides old Lady O. ; an exhibition of two or three leading political characters would not be amiss'; and in another letter he 'wants to know all he can that he may say something about it in the papers to excite curiosity and expectation without in the least gratifying it.'

With Colburn's arts to aid its intrinsic merits *Henrietta Temple* was more successful than any of Disraeli's novels that had appeared since *Vivian Grey*. Some of his friends, however, were disappointed. Bulwer 'thinks my speech the finest in the world and my novel the worst,' he writes to his sister ; and D'Orsay and Lady Blessington apparently agree with Bulwer. There has been a curious divergence of view among the critics ever since. Those to whom Disraeli is primarily a politician and his distinctive work in literature the creation of the political novel despise *Henrietta Temple* because of the absence of political motive. To Froude, for instance, it is a \*clever story, but without the merit or the interest which would have given it a permanent<sup>1</sup> Letters, p.